



John Muir Correspondence (PDFs)

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1871-12-11

**Letter from [John Muir] to Mrs.[Jeanne C.] Carr , [1871] Dec 11.**

John Muir

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Yosemite Dec 4th

Dear Mrs Carr, We are aboard & your letter of Nov<sup>r</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> came two days ago, I sympathize with you for the loss of your brown Japanese, but I am glad to know that you found so much of pure human goodness in the life of your scholar, The whole world is enriched, beautified by a stratum - an atmosphere of Godlike souls, & it is ignorance alone that banks human love into narrow gutter channels & stagnant-pools making it selfish & impure when it should be boundless as air & light - blending with the world, keeping sight of our impartial Father who is the sum of all the love that is in & down to earth.

Glaciers dear friend, ice is only another form of terrestrial love, I am astonished to hear you speak so unbelievably of Gods glorious crystal glaciers "They are only pets," & you think them wrong in temperature, & they lived in "horrible times" & you don't care to hear about them "only that they made instruments of Yosemite Music" You speak heresy for once, & deserve a dip in Methuselah's Tophet, or Vesuvius at least.

I have just been sending ice to de Conte, & know to McClellan, & I have nothing left but hailstones for you, but I don't know how to send them - to speak them, You confuse me You have taught me here & encouraged me to read the mountains now you will not listen, next summer you will be converted. You will be ice then - I have been up Nevada to the top of Lyell & found a living glacier. but you don't want that & I have been in Witch Hetchy & the Canon above & I was going to tell

you the beauty there, but it is all ice born beauty & too cold for you, & I was going to tell about the making of the South dome, but ice did that too, & about the hundred lakes that I found, but the ice made them everyone, & I had some groves to speak about - groves of surpassing loveliness in new pathless Yosemite, but they all grew upon glacial drift, & I have nothing to send but what is frozen or freezable.

You like the music instruments that glaciers made, but no songs were so grand as those of the ~~ice~~<sup>glaciers</sup> themselves. No falls so lofty as those which poured from brows, & charmed mountains of pure ~~dark~~ <sup>glaciers</sup> made the mountains & ground corn for ~~us~~, & the forests of silver fir, made smooth paths ~~for us~~ but until the sacred rivers have become the most approachable of mountains, glaciers came down from heaven, & they are angels with folded wings, white wings of snowy bloom, looked hand in hand the little spirits did nobly - the primary mountain waves - unscathed granite were soon carried to beauty. They bared the lordly domes & fashioned the clustering spires smoothed godlike mountain brows & shaped lake cups for crystal waters - more myriads of, many canons, & spread them out - like lace "they" remembered the loud songed rivers & every tinkling rill, & the busy snow flakes saw all the coming flowers, & the grand predestined forests. They said "We will crack this rock for Cassiope where she may sway her tiny arms, here will smooth a plot for green mosses, & round a bank for bryanthus bells. Thus labored the willing flake souls linked in close congregations of ice breaking rock food for the pines, as a bird ~~premeditates~~ bread for her young.



spiced with dust of garnets & zircons & many a nameless gem, & when food was gathered for the flocks & all their elected life; when every rock-form was finished, every monument raised, the willing messengers unwearied unwasted heard Gods well done from heaven calling them back to their homes in the sky —

GF

January 8th 72

Dear friend.

We are gloriously snowbound! One storm has filled half the month & it is snowing again, & you could behold its beauty I half expect another glacial period - but I will not say anything about ice until you become wiser but I send you a cascade jubilee wh. you will relish more than anybody else, I have tried to put it in form for publication, & if you can rasp off the rougher angles & wedge in a few slippery words between bad splices perhaps it may be sufficiently civilized for Oberland or Atlantic but I always felt a chill come over my fingers when a calm place in the storm allowed me to think of it. Also I have been sorry for one of our bears & I think you will sympathize with me, At least I confide my dead friends to your keeping & you may present what you like. Heavens! If you only had been here in this flood

To Mrs. Ezra S. Carr

Referred to in her letter of  
Feb. 4, 1872.

Yosemite, Dec. 14th [1871] *Conrad*

Dear Mrs. Carr,

We are snowbound and your letter of Nov 1st came two days ago. I sympathize with you for the loss of your brown Japanese, but I am glad to know that you found so much of pure human goodness in the life of your scholar. The whole world is enriched, beautified by a stratum - an atmosphere - of Godlike souls, and it is ignorance alone that banks human love into narrow gutter channels and stagnant pools, making it selfish and impure when it should be boundless as air and light, blending with all the world, keeping sight of our impartial Father who is (the) fountain sun of all the love that is rayed down to earth. But glaciers, dear friend, ice is only another form of terrestrial love. I am astonished to hear you speak so unbelievably of God's glorious crystal glaciers. "They are only pests", and you think them wrong in temperature, and they lived in "horrible times" and you don't care to hear about them "only that they made instruments of Yosemite music". You speak heresy for once, and deserve a dip in Methodist Tophet, or Vesuvius at least.

I have just been sending ice to LeConte, and snow to McChesney and I have nothing left but hailstones for you, but I don't know how to send them -- to speak them. You confuse me. You have taught me here and encouraged me to read the mountains. Now you will not listen, next summer you will be converted -- you will be iced then.

I have been up Nevada to the top of Lyell and found a living glacier, but you don't want that; and I have been in Hetch Hetchy and the cañon above, and I was going to tell you the beauty there; but it is all ice-born beauty, and too cold for you; and I was going to tell about the making of the South Dome, but ice did that too; and about the hundred lakes that I found, but the ice made them every one; and I had some groves to speak about -- groves of surpassing loveliness in new pathless Yosemite, but they all grew upon glacial drift, -- and I have nothing to send but what is frozen or freezable.

You like the music instruments that glaciers made, but no songs were so grand as those of the glaciers themselves, no falls so lofty as those which poured from brows, and chasmed mountains of pure dark ice. Glaciers made the mountains and ground corn for all the flowers, and the forests of silver fir, made smooth paths for human feet until the sacred Sierras have become the most approachable of mountains. Glaciers came down from heaven, and they are angels with folded wings, white wings of snowy bloom, locked hand in hand the little spirits did nobly; the primary mountain waves, unvital granite, were soon carved to beauty. They bared the lordly domes and fashioned the clustering spires; smoothed godlike mountain brows, and shaped lake cups for crystal waters; wove myriads of mazy cañons, and spread them out like lace. They remembered the loud-songed rivers and every tinkling rill. The busy snowflakes saw all the coming flowers, and the grand predestined forests. They said, "We will crack this rock for Cassiope where she may sway her tiny urns. Here we'll smooth a plat for green mosses, and round a bank for bryanthus bells". Thus labored the willing flake-souls linked in close congregations of ice, breaking rock food for the pines, as a bird crumbles bread for her young, spiced with dust of garnets and zircons and many a nameless gem; and when food was gathered for the forests and all their elected life, when every rock form was finished, every monument raised, the willing messengers, unwearied, unwasted, heard God's "Well done" from heaven calling them back to their homes in the sky.

[John Muir]

<sup>The</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>The</sup>  
[Following written on same sheet]

January 8th, 1872.

Dear Friend,

We are gloriously snowbound. One storm has filled half of last month, and it is snowing again. Would that you could behold its beauty! I half expected another glacial period, but I will not say anything about ice until you become wiser, then I send you a cascade jubilee which you will relish more than anybody else. I have tried to put it in form for publication, and if you can rasp off the rougher angles and wedge in a few slippery words between bad splices perhaps it may be sufficiently civilized for Overland or Atlantic. But I always felt a chill come over my fingers when a calm place in the storm allowed me to think of it. Also I have been sorry for one of our bears and I think you will



[Letter to Mrs. Carr of January 8, 1872, continued]

sympathize with me. At least I confide my dead friend to your keeping, and you may print what you like. Heavens! if you only had been here in the flood.

[John Muir]